

Mill Bridge (Mill Street Bridge)
Spanning the south branch of
Little Wolf River, on Mill Street
Village of Scandinavia
Waupaca County
Wisconsin

HAER No. WI-35

HAER
WIS,
68-SCAN,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 37127
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Mill Bridge
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Location: Spanning the south branch of Little Wolf River on Mill Street, Village of Scandinavia, Waupaca County, Wisconsin

Date of Construction: 1907

Builder: Lars Anderson

Present Owner: Village of Scandinavia

Present Use: Vehicular bridge

Significance: The Mill Bridge is the village's main thoroughfare across the Little Wolf River. Its construction in 1907 was part of a general economic boom in the village.

The Mill Bridge is an excellent example of Waupaca County fieldstone bridges, which consist of small, uniformly oval stones, in contrast to large uneven granite boulders found in other masonry bridges of other counties in the State.

Historian: Lola Bennett
Wisconsin Historic Bridge Recording Project
August 1987

COMMUNITY HISTORY

The village of Scandinavia, Wisconsin, was settled by Norwegians in 1856. The area's economy was largely based on dairying and potato farming.

In 1906, the village decided to build a one-arch bridge on Main Street over the Little Wolf River. The village board recommended that the bridge should be concrete, but the contractors built a stone arch bridge instead, because it was cheaper. The bridge was accepted by the village board in August 1906 at the cost of \$1,224.¹

In July 1907, the village board voted to construct another stone bridge across the Little Wolf River, at the site of the mill in the center of the village. The lowest bidder, Lars Anderson, a local mason, was awarded the contract. The bridge was completed in November at a total cost of \$1,027.²

Construction of the bridges was part of a general economic boom in the village, which then consisted of about 450 people. Civic improvements also included the establishment of a bank (1900) and a telephone company (1903).³

The second stone bridge was known as the Mill Bridge because of its close proximity to the site of the village grist mill, which also served as a power generating station. When the street crossing over the bridge was named Mill Street, the bridge became known as the Mill Street Bridge.

RUBBLE-FIELDSTONE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

Seven rubble-masonry bridges exist in Waupaca County, all of which were built between 1900 and 1908. Ranging from one to three arches, the bridges are characterized by matched, rounded fieldstone of relatively small size, which is also a common trait among stone buildings in the area.⁴ The only other region in Wisconsin with a sizeable sample of rubble-fieldstone bridges is Price Country. There, the masonry consists of fairly large, unevenly shaped, granite boulders. On the Waupaca County bridges, however, the fieldstone tends to be smaller and more uniformly oval, averaging 10-16 inches in diameter, with mortar joints about one-inch thick. The Mill Bridge is an excellent example of this regional building type.⁵

DESCRIPTION

The bridge is a rubble-fieldstone (mostly granite), segmental arch bridge with sandstone ring stones and metal pipe railings. The wing walls are slightly flared at each end. Springing about one foot above the waterline, the arch rises 6 feet over a span of 19 feet. The bridge's length, excluding the wing walls, is about 35 feet; its width is about 20 feet. In 1981, the abutments were encased in concrete to guard against scour (an inscription in the concrete bears the date 1981).

SIGNIFICANCE

The Mill Bridge is locally significant as the village's main thoroughfare across the Little Wolf River. It is also a visual reminder of an important period in the village's history.

The Mill Bridge is an excellent example of a regional building type. Its significance is enhanced by its proximity to an excellent example of coursed-ashlar bridge construction about one-half mile upstream, also in Scandinavia. Together, these two bridges document the regional tradition of stone-arch bridge construction that flourished in Waupaca County during the first decade of the twentieth century.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Scandinavia Village Board Minutes, February 14, March 7, 27, August 1, 1906, unpublished (Scandinavia Village Hall, Scandinavia, Wisconsin). Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Waupaca County, Wisconsin, 1906, p. 52.
- 2 Scandinavia Village Board Minutes, July 5, 9, August 7, November 6, 1907.
- 3 John M. Ware, ed., A Standard History of Waupaca County Wisconsin, Vol. 1 (Chicago and New York, 1917), pp. 349-354.
- 4 Jeffrey A. Hess and Robert M. Frame, Historic Highway Bridges in Wisconsin: Stone and Concrete Arch Bridges (Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1986), pp. 51-59, 88-102, 162-169.

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